

Jurassic Coast

Teaching Schools Alliance

Introductory Newsletter

The aim of this newsletter is to ensure that everyone in the alliance is fully informed about what is going on and aware of the opportunities on offer. It is also a sign we are on track to hit the ground running in September.



The Background

The Jurassic Coast Teaching Schools Alliance was formally designated in March following a fairly tortuous application procedure. This involved calling in Ofsted early to ensure that Woodroffe had the requisite Grade 1 for Teaching – a move that naturally delighted every member of staff.

The introductory event was held at The National College where we were given some indication of the importance of Teaching School Alliances, both to the government and the profession in general. The cast list, including the delightful Mr. Gove, most of the NCSL team, representatives from the new Teaching Agency and the ex-HMCI Christine Gilbert, perhaps gives a sense of the drive behind the scheme. We are very fortunate to be in at the beginning but also likely to be held seriously to account if we don't make it work.

We are in the second cohort of Teaching Schools – the plan is to designate a maximum of 500 – and one of only a handful in the South West. We are therefore in a position genuinely to blaze a trail and do something really exciting in a national arena.

Above all, we are in a position to do something really special for the children and young people in our schools.

Richard Steward

The Alliance

The Woodroffe School
 The King's School
 Colyton Grammar School
 Axe Valley Community College
 Budmouth Technology College
 Holyrood Academy
 Mountjoy Special School
 Thorncombe, St. Mary's
 Marshwood School
 Mrs Ethelston's, Uplyme
 Chardstock Primary
 St. Michael's, Lyme Regis
 Charmouth School
 St. Mary's Bridport
 The University of Exeter
 Babcock Devon
 Dorset LA

This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to shape the future. If, over the coming years, we can create a national network of teaching school alliances that draws on the very best practice the system has to offer and ensures that each and every child benefits from its influence, we will have achieved something unprecedented. Steve Mumby



Introductory Conference

The first Jurassic Coast Teaching Schools Conference will take place on **Tuesday 10th July** at Monks Yard nr. Ilminster. The aim of the conference will be to introduce everyone to each other and to create a real sense of momentum before we begin work as a Teaching School Alliance in September. It is hoped that partner schools will be represented by the head/principal and a senior colleague. There will also be representatives from our key non-school partners, including The University of Exeter, Babcock and Dorset LA.

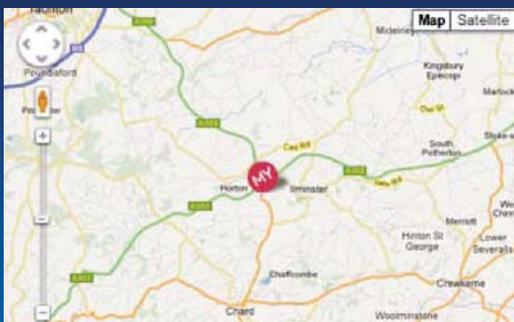
Our NCSL representative, Gilly Smith, will be on hand to answer questions; Sue Mogg from the new Teaching Agency has also agreed to attend.

We will need to consider the Action Plan and its consequences but we will also need to think about the first steps into this brave new world. It is important to ensure that we begin working collaboratively from the outset and it would be good to finish the day with a clearly defined set of activities to initiate in the autumn term.



Teaching Schools Administrator

We are delighted to announce that we have just appointed Nicola Payne as a full-time administrator with part-time responsibility for our Teaching Schools operation. She takes up her post at the end of the summer term when she will become the first point of contact for all Teaching School Enquiries.



Close to both the M5 and the A303 – the gateway to the South West. Our rural location is by no means disconnected – less than 30 minutes from both Taunton and Yeovil.

Monks Yard

Horton Cross Farm, Horton Cross, Ilminster, Somerset, TA19 9PT



A Tentative Philosophy

It is vital that our work as a Teaching School Alliance is underpinned by sound principles. Following discussions across the partnership, it is clear that there are many things that we can already agree upon. Hopefully, a more profound philosophy will develop as we begin working together but it may be helpful to set out some key ideas and values.



Learning is at the heart of everything we do

- An intensive focus on learning should be at the core of our alliance
- CPD should lead to better outcomes for staff and students alike
- The alliance is working for every child in the partnership with the aim of improving outcomes across the area and not just in our own schools
- Schools get better only by looking outwards and not inwards
- The expertise needed to raise standards still further already exists in our schools
- Improving classroom practice is the key to effective leadership
- Reflective learning develops into reflective leadership
- Advanced pedagogy is a product of 'disciplined innovation'
- Joint Practice Development is a vital school improvement strategy
- Closer working builds trust, raises 'social capital' and increases 'intellectual capital'

Joint Practice Development

This is a description of a powerful, common sense method of school improvement developed by David Hargreaves, who spoke at the Induction Conference in Nottingham. He outlined the necessity for a move away from the *knowledge model* of professional development towards a *practice model* where the emphasis is less on cognitive change through the acquisition of academic knowledge and more on the progressive element of best professional practice. Its focus is learning-by-doing.

In *Leading a Self-improving School System* (Hargreaves, NCSL 2011) JDP is defined thus:

'...a process that is truly collaborative, not one-way; the practice is being improved, not just moved from one person or place to another. Joint Practice Development gives birth to innovation and grounds it in the routines of what teachers naturally do. Innovation is fused with and grows out of practice, and when the new practice is demonstrably superior, escape from the poorer practice is expedited.'

Some things to think about before the Conference

- How should we carry out an audit of expertise across the alliance?
- What categories of expertise need to be identified (subject, pastoral, Leadership, ITT etc.)?
- What CPD needs does your school have which are not being met either locally or nationally?
- What kind of CPD could we offer more effectively 'in-house' across the alliance?
- Is Trio working an effective model for developing stronger links across the alliance?
- How should the alliance be structured?
 - Governor involvement?
 - Strategic/Management committees?
 - A classroom practitioners committee/group?
 - A Research Group?
- What kind of 'quick wins' can we make next term?
 - ITT conferences? NQT support?
 - 'Achievement Show' training days
 - R&D website
 - Cross alliance Trios
 - Coordinated ITT work with Exeter
 - A Sixth Form Introduction to Teaching course
- Every Teaching Schools Alliance has been given £5k for Leadership Development. How best should we spend it?
- How quickly should we expand the alliance?



Initial R&D bid submitted in May

The aim of the proposed research is to develop an understanding of the leadership skills and strategies needed to create a sophisticated network of 'Trio' based Joint Practice Development. The Woodroffe School has used 'Trios' (three teachers working together to observe each other, plan lessons together and share feedback) dramatically to improve CPD provision. Trios have operated across departments and, recently, across phases, as we have explored pedagogy across the primary/secondary divide. A key feature of our TS alliance will be the extension of Trio working across all schools - and at all levels, including Trainees, NQTs, MPS teachers, middle and senior leaders.

Our research will focus not just on the good practice emerging from the proliferation of Trios across the alliance but on the effects of collaboration and the leadership strategies employed to ensure successful outcomes for teachers and pupils. How can a simple model, which has proved effective in one school and one context, be adapted to involve an increasingly large number of schools? How can such a model help build social and intellectual capital across the system?

SLEs: Who? What? Why? Where? When?

The Teaching Schools Handbook definition:

SLEs are middle or senior leaders in schools with capacity and commitment to school to school outreach work, directly supporting other middle/senior leaders by applying their specialist knowledge and expertise and so improving outcomes for children.

The handbook also contains an admission:

... until the SLE role becomes better established there may be some confusion about how SLEs are distinctive and different.

The SLE role is clearly an important opportunity for the alliance but there is still something of a cloud of unknowing around both their designation and their deployment. Colleagues will have seen the recent email from the NCSL regarding the timetable for designation but there are still questions to be answered. In particular, how many SLEs will the alliance be able to create?

The cohort 2 SLE application round will open on 7 September 2012, for 3 weeks, closing at midnight on 30 September 2012. The SLE application has been divided into two parts, part 1 is an online registration and part 2 is a word document which can be downloaded for completion off line. By the end of the summer term aspirant SLEs will be able to download the word part of the application form from the website.

Teaching school alliance are encouraged to work out what their needs are and identify staff they should be encouraging to become SLEs. This is clearly an important starting point and something to be discussed on the day of the conference. How many SLEs we will be able to designate remains to be seen. Hopefully, further advice will follow.

A good starting point would be a discussion about the needs of the alliance, followed by some attempt to match existing expertise to those needs. We can also consider whether we should be creating an SLE team, rather than a collection of individuals.

And then, of course, we need to work out exactly what we want our SLEs to do!



SLEs already appointed

In preparation for the Teaching Schools Bid, Woodroffe encouraged five members of staff to apply for SLE status and two were appointed. Initially attached to the Poole/Montacute Teaching School, we have now reached agreement for them to be transferred to our alliance.

Sharron Hutchings is currently Head of Year 9 and a very experienced middle leader. She is a highly skilled Head of Year but her SLE designation is based upon her work in ITT.

Richard Vine is Head of Art and Digital Technology, overseeing both Art and ICT at Woodroffe. His appointment is in the field of subject leadership.

Both colleagues are looking forward to working across the alliance and hoping to be joined next term by new SLEs from other partner schools.

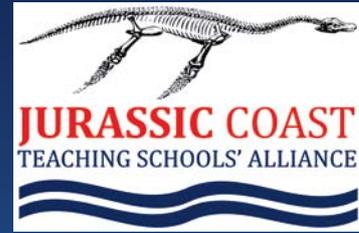
Stop Press – Holyrood Academy

Following discussions with Maurice Hicks we are delighted to welcome Holyrood Academy into the Jurassic Coast Teaching Schools Alliance.

Holyrood will bring a wealth of expertise and useful contacts, and, as an NPQH License school, link two expanding networks in a mutually beneficial relationship.

The Alliance now has partner schools in three counties.

Licenses, Memoranda, Websites and Finances



NCSL Discussion Group

All headteachers/principals of our alliance schools should now have access to the NCSL Teaching Schools Group on their website:

<https://network.nationalcollege.org.uk/groups/16391>

Access is limited for some unknown reason but if you contact Woodroffe, a groveling request can be made on your behalf and you may be allowed to join if you promise not to reveal any of the fantastically confidential information hidden on the site.

Our Website

This is under construction and should be up and running by September. It is hoped to display a wide range of information, as well as hosting a dedicated Action Research section.

NPQH Modules

Due to the somewhat chaotic distribution of NCSL Licenses, our alliance is likely to be linked to two license holders: Holyrood School in Chard, who are working with Granada Learning, and The Kingsbridge/Ivybridge Teaching School Partnership, who are working with SELT. It is clearly important for us to be involved with the delivery of NCSL modules at all levels but how this will work remains to be seen. For now, it is probably best to keep a foot in both camps. Colleagues are encouraged to apply for facilitator training, details of which have been circulated.

Memorandum of Understanding

Each Teaching School Partnership is expected to have one of these. It is simply a commitment to work together and an outline of our mutual expectations. Another possible discussion topic for the Conference.

Additional Advisors

In addition to the expertise available in our schools, we will be able to draw upon the skills of two leading educationalists: **Stephen Bugg**, ex-Senior Secondary Advisor/SIP Manager, Dorset, now Hartgrove Consultancy, and Professor **Gordon Stobart** from the Institute of Education, University of London.

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The Finances

Following the submission of our Action Plan, the funding will be released. Since it is minimal (£60k in Year 1) we will have to work hard in order to make the alliance self-financing. A business plan will be needed at some point!

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